



AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is :

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus for the preservation of still beverages comprising:
 - a vacuum tank for maintaining a standing vacuum;
 - a vacuum pump fluidly connected to said vacuum tank for reducing a pressure in said tank to create the vacuum;
 - a vacuum line fluidly connected to said vacuum tank; ~~and~~
 - at least one valve head fluidly connected to said vacuum line for interfacing with a bottle having a stopper placed therein, said valve head comprising an actuator, wherein upon actuation air in the ~~wine~~ bottle is substantially evacuated by exposure to the vacuum and is prevented from reentering the bottle by the stopper; and,
 - a vacuum release, wherein following evacuation of the bottle the pressure between said valve head and the stopper is equalized with atmospheric pressure.
2. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said actuator displaces a valve seat located in said valve head to expose the stopper to the vacuum upon displacement of said valve seat.
3. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a trap in said vacuum line to prevent liquid or contaminants from entering said vacuum tank.

4. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a feedback mechanism, wherein said feedback mechanism starts said vacuum pump when the vacuum in said vacuum tank is below a first pre-determined level and stops said vacuum pump when the vacuum in said vacuum tank reaches a second predetermined level.
5. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a gauge to determine the level of the vacuum in said vacuum tank.
6. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a manifold for attachment of a plurality of vacuum lines.
7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the valve head further comprises:
 - a valve body housing a valve stem for controlling the communication of vacuum from said vacuum line to the bottle; ~~and,~~
 - ~~a vacuum relief port.~~
8. (original) The apparatus of claim 7 further comprising a valve seat, wherein said valve seat is disposed on said valve stem and is displaced axially upon the actuation of said actuator.
9. (original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said valve stem further comprises a reduced diameter portion having a smaller diameter than the diameter of said valve seat, said reduced diameter portion being advanced through an opening

created by the axial displacement of said valve seat upon actuation, and wherein the advancement of said reduced diameter portion in the opening permits fluid communication between said valve body and said vacuum line.

10. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said vacuum tank maintains a standing vacuum between about 17 in-Hg and about 25 in-Hg.
11. (original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said vacuum tank maintains a standing vacuum between about 22 in-Hg and about 24 in-Hg.
12. (original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein air remaining in a partially consumed 750 ml bottle is substantially evacuated in no more than about 3.5 seconds.
13. (CANCELLED)
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16. (CANCELLED)
17. (CANCELLED)
18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for preserving still beverages by substantially evacuating air contained in a bottle comprising the steps of:
inserting a stopper having a one-way valve into a bottle;

inserting the stoppered bottle into a valve head of an apparatus having a vacuum tank for maintaining a standing vacuum, a vacuum pump connected to the vacuum tank for reducing a pressure in the tank to create the vacuum, a vacuum line connected to the vacuum tank, and a valve head connected to the vacuum line;

actuating the valve head to permit the application of the vacuum in the vacuum line to the stoppered bottle;~~and,~~

removing air from the bottle through the stopper;

relieving the vacuum between the stopper and the valve head once the desired vacuum has been attained in the bottle; and

removing the stoppered bottle from the valve head.

19. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein said vacuum tank maintains a standing vacuum between about 17 in-Hg and about 25 in-Hg.
20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein said vacuum tank maintains a standing vacuum between about 22 in-Hg and about 24 in-Hg.
21. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein air remaining in a partially consumed 750 ml bottle is substantially evacuated in no more than about 3.5 seconds.
22. (NEW) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said vacuum release is a vacuum relief port.